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BEYROUT.

BEYROUT, called by some travellers Beyrouth, Bairout, or Bayruth, is a city of Turkey in Asia, in Syria, in the pachalic of Acre, within twenty-five leagues of that place, and distant twenty leagues from Damascus. Beyrout is the ancient Berytus, the beginning of which history has almost lost in the night of time. So long ago was this old city built, that its origin is enveloped in fable, and the mythologists declare Saturn to have been its founder, and to be the first who made it a place of habitation. Strabo, Pliny, Ptolemy, and others of the ancient writers, record the wonders of Berytus.

The name is supposed to be derived, by some, from the Phœnician idol Baal-Berith, a temple in whose honour was erected on this spot. Others, on the contrary, suppose the word to have originated in the salubrity of the locality, owing to the abundant supply of water which is there to be found. In the Phœnician language it signifies a well.

The old town was destroyed by Diodotus Tryphon, but after the conquest of Syria by the Romans it was rebuilt near the site of the ancient city.

Historians who eschew the mythological origin tell us that Berytus was a colony of Sidon (the modern Saida), and the fatherland of that celebrated historian of Phœnicia, Sanchoniathon, who lived, according to some writers, among which Porphyry is numbered, in the days of Semiramis, and, according to others, in the times of Gideon, the judge of Israel, twelve hundred and forty-five years before the commencement of the Christian era. In Berytus, it is said, the invention of glass was first made, a fact which gives additional interest to the spot. The Emperor Augustus in later days made it a Roman colony, and called it Julia Felix—the name Julia in honour of his daughter, and the epithet *Felix* (happy) to express his admiration of the fertility of the neighbourhood, the incomparable climate, and the magnificence of the situation. Medals were afterwards struck in honour of the Roman emperors bearing the legend, "Colonia Felix Berytus." Herod the Great held at Berytus a solemn court of judicature, at which he condemned to death his two sons, Alexander and Aristobulus, on a charge of treason. At Berytus, also, Agrippa, the grandson of Herod the Great, built a theatre, an amphitheatre, and baths, and instituted a variety of games, which made the place notorious. When Jerusalem had fallen before the Roman soldiers, Titus celebrated, at Berytus, the birthday of his father, Vespasian. But the place was famous for other things besides its stately theatre, or the grand revels which were held there: it was famous for the study of the law. Alexander Severus had founded a celebrated school there. Justinian called it the "nurse of the law," and would permit no other professors to expound Roman justice but such as had been educated at Rome, Constantinople, or Berytus. Berytus was one of the fairest cities of Phœnicia, celebrated all over the East for its civil government, and counted as a very school and pattern for other cities. There happened at Berytus, in the year of grace 556, a terrible earthquake; in 1109, the city sustained a memorable siege against Baldwin, king of Jerusalem, who took the place from the Saracens; and in 1187 was besieged again, this time by the redoubtable Saladin, sultan of Egypt and Syria. Three-quarters of an hour's ride from Beyrout may still be seen the stately pines, from some of which the Saracens constructed their besieging apparatus, and which proved too strong and powerful for Christian chivalry. Until the time of Saladin, the good knights of Christendom had successfully defied the crescent; but his military skill and daring overcame them at Beyrout, and Moslems rejoiced in the streets of the city. In 1197, the crusaders and the Mahomedans fought a hard fight between Tyre and Sidon, and victory was declared on the side of the cross. When the people of Beyrout heard that the Christians were marching down upon the city, and that Makel Adel and his troops had been defeated, they fled from their homes, and the conquerors found the city well supplied with provisions, arms, and other military stores, and not one follower of the Prophet to dispute the spoil! Thus changing

hands between the Turks and Christians, Beyrout was the scene of many a defeat and many a victory in crusading times. It is the scene of the fabled encounter between St. George and the dragon, and the glorious triumph of the saint over the beast. The last struggle came; the glory of the crusaders was over; and the Christian lords of Beyrout had to submit to their destiny.

"The knights are dust,
Their swords are rust,
Their souls are with the saints we trust."

Christian rule in Beyrout ended in the year 1291; after that period the city was under the domination of the Emirs. One of the most celebrated of these was the Emir Fakhr-Eddin, who made it the capital of his dominions and his own favourite residence. This prince undertook a journey to Italy, and continued for nine years at the court of the Medici at Florence, studying the fine arts, particularly architecture. When he returned to his own country, he built a splendid palace at Beyrout, the remains of which are still to be seen; but alas! his cultivated taste brought swift destruction on him. The sultan, jealous of his power and renown, commissioned another petty prince to dispossess the Emir of his dominions, and to bring him prisoner to Stamboul. It was a hard struggle for the unfortunate Emir to obtain even the privilege of being allowed to live; and when, a short time afterwards, his grandchildren raised a revolt, even this favour was taken away, and the poor Emir lost his head, which was exposed to the public gaze, and left to rot and blacken in the sun, with this inscription under it, "The head of the rebel, Fakhr-Eddin." The dominions once belonging to the unfortunate Emir were now made over to another lord, of a noble Arabian family, dwelling at Mecca, in which family the authority has continued to be invested to the present time; and the family tree taking deep root in Beyrout, numbers no less than two hundred and fifty Emirs.

In 1783, Djezzar Pacha, the same who, a few years later, defended with great tact and success Saint Jean d'Acre against the French army, returned to Beyrout, and made that place a Turkish garrison. When Ibrahim Pacha, at the end of 1831, invaded Syria, Emir Beschir did not attempt to resist him. Beyrout, Jaffa, Acre, Tripoli, were abandoned; but the Arabs relate a curious incident which occurred as Ibrahim was about to enter Beyrout. At a short distance from the gate, as the Pacha was traversing a cross-road, an enormous serpent uncoiled itself directly in his path, and as his horse approached, prepared for the fatal dart. The attendants shrieked and retreated in alarm, the horse reared frightfully, the only man unconcerned was the Pacha, who, drawing his sabre from its sheath, struck at the reptile, and, with one well-aimed blow, cut off its head! Then, without a word, he continued his route and rode into the streets of the old city.

Beyrout possesses, from its commercial character, an air of greater bustle and activity than any other town in Syria. The situation, on the borders of the sea and in close proximity to Lebanon, renders it exceedingly beautiful. Near the gate there is a small eminence from which a commanding prospect may be obtained; a panorama of unequalled grandeur presents itself to the eye. There, in all their magnificence, rise the hills of Lebanon; to the east there is a low, long promontory, on the end of which are situated the Lazaretto buildings, near which vessels ride at anchor in the roads; and all round the town are richly wooded environs, dotted with villas and the rural residences of merchants. A Genoese wall surrounds the town itself, but this is of no great strength; the harbour is commanded by an old fortress, which is in a ruinous condition. There is a small pier for loading boats. The roads are so exposed that, when it comes on to blow, ships generally make for the mouth of Naler-el-Kelb, or the Dog River, where they are more securely sheltered. There are still remaining some curious old fragments of the ancient city; a half-circular ruin, supposed to be the amphitheatre of Agrippa,

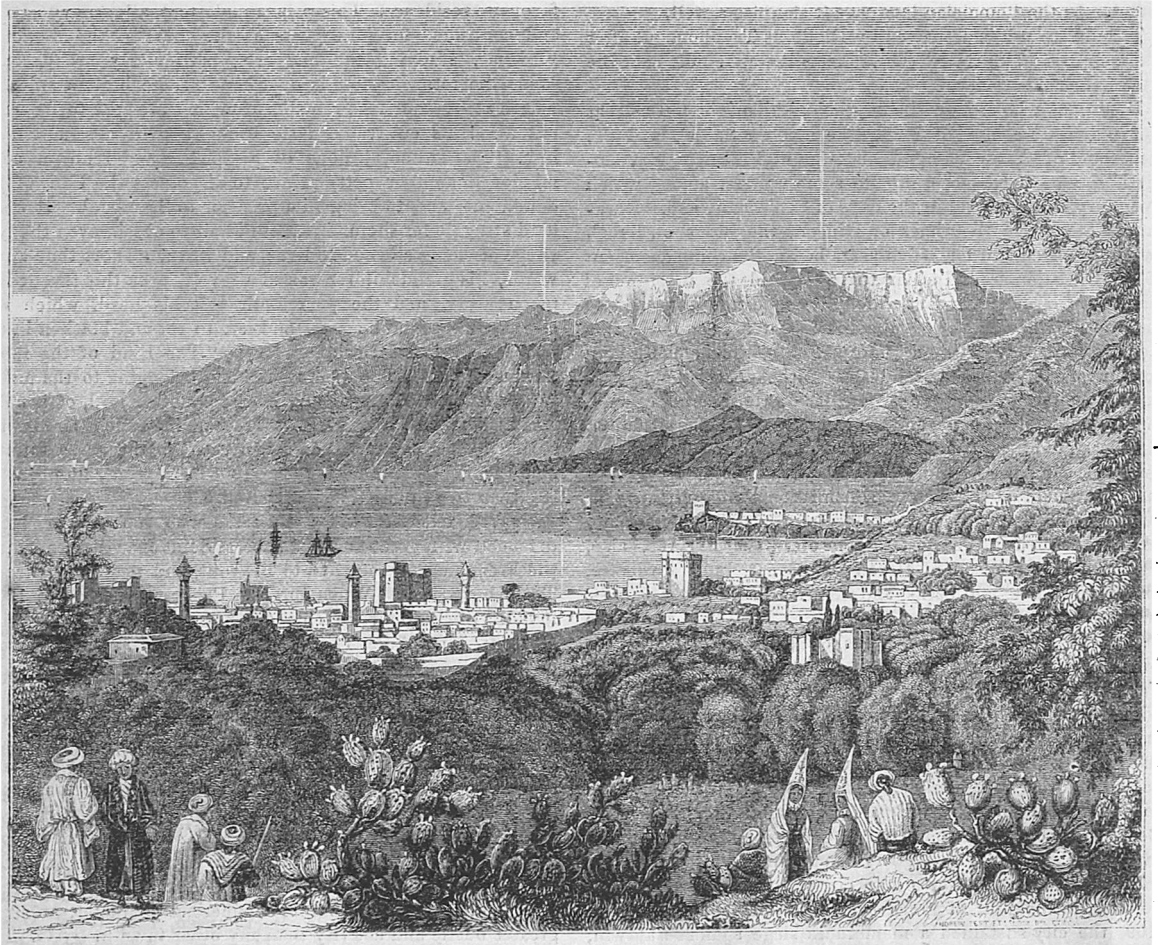
part of an aqueduct, and traces of the Roman baths, are the principal.

The population of Beyrout is composed of Maronites, Greek Catholics, and Arab Mussulmen, numbering in all about 10,000 souls. There are several British and Continental mercantile houses. Near the bay is the residence of the British Consul, and not far distant is the house of the American Consul. The Mahommedans have lost much of their fanaticism, and are more disposed to be tolerant than they were in days gone by—perhaps it may be that Christians have likewise grown more tolerant; but, however this may be, men of all faiths are allowed to worship without danger in the city of Beyrout. There are representatives of the Greek church, and the Maronite church, a Protestant congregation, a Jewish assembly,

service is conducted in the Presbyterian form at the American Consulate.

The usual characteristics of eastern cities are to be found in Beyrout, such as narrow streets rendered almost impassable by camels, asses, mules, and crowds of busy and idle people—the same sort of shops, and stores, and way of doing business; but the whole neighbourhood is remarkable for its beauty and fertility. The entire country is richly wooded, the mountains being covered with vines and olives in terraces, and watered by small canals or streamlets. Dehr el Kamer, where the Emir dwells, occupies the side of a hill, and the palace is a very splendid building.

The Druses, who form a large majority not only of the population of Beyrout but of the surrounding country, are a



BEYROUT, AND THE MOUNTAINS OF LEBANON.

and a host of Druses and Mussulmen. The Christians have four churches, and the Mahommedans three beautiful mosques, with minarets, courts, and fountains. In the very centre of the city is the Grand Mosque, and, hard by, an ancient church dedicated to St. John, and ornamented with a Gothic colonnade. The French have a small chapel and convent of Capuchins, in the garden of which six Englishmen lie buried. They died of wounds received in the siege of St. Jean d'Acre, in 1799; so, to the English traveller, this Capuchin garden becomes a place of pilgrimage.

Several American missionaries have taken up their residence in the environs of Beyrout, and by their unpretending labours are accomplishing great good, distributing, by means of schools and a printing-press of their own, a great deal of religious and general information. Every Sunday, divine

wild, ungovernable race of people. They are equally opposed to Turk and Christian; they stand alone in the world. There is a strange mystery hanging over their domestic life, internal government, and especially over their faith. From some of their books it appears that they worship Flakem Bamri, the fifth of the Fatimite Caliphs. One peculiar portion of the people is set apart for the ministration of religious rites, as the tribe of Levi is distinguished among the Jews. They are initiated into the mysteries of the faith; but respecting these mysteries the great mass of the people remain in entire ignorance. The Druses are a race quite distinct from the other Arabian tribes; some, indeed, suppose them to be the descendants of those armies of vast European hordes which formed the Great Christian Crusade.